# UNITED NATIONS STAFF UNION

SCB/1156
6 January 1994

## *GENERAL MEETING OF THE STAFF*

**WEDNESDAY, 12 JANUARY 1994**

**1:15 P.M.**

**CONFERENCE ROOM 4**

AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Report of the Staff Committee
3. Financial report

# STAFF COMMITTEE BULLETIN

94-00627

## INTRODUCTION

Every Staff Committee deals with difficult problems, this is inherent in its very function as an intermediary between the Administration as well as the General Assembly with its subsidiary bodies on the one hand, and the staff at large on the other. The outgoing Committee may, however, be justified in feeling that its term of office was marked by problems both more numerous and more challenging than any Committee has faced in recent memory.

## I. ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE STAFF UNION

1. For the first time in many years, the Staff Union statute was adapted to new realities. In particular, the term of office of the future Staff Councils was extended to two years to allow for greater continuity.

2. The Staff Committee conducted an extremely successful membership drive in June 1993, for the first time in many years. Membership increased by nearly 600 members

3. Such a membership drive should be an annual feature of the Union with the goal being a 100% participation in the Staff Union.

4. Preliminary financial statements of the Staff Union as of Sep. 30, 1993 are attached to the present report. Final audited statements will be submitted to the first General Meeting to be held during the term of the 37th Staff Council.

5. Agreement was reached with management to issue letters of release for all staff representatives and staff-nominated representatives in joint bodies, such as promotion bodies and the Joint Appeals Board. In accordance with the Staff Rules, such staff should be given sufficient time to discharge their responsibilities which are considered official duties.

## II. STAFF/MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

6. In the beginning, the Staff Committee encountered considerable difficulties in this area, largely due to the constant changes at the top of the Administration. During the latter part of the reporting period, the situation improved, both in the framework of the formal consultation machinery (the Joint Advisory Committee, or JAC) and in informal settings. The functioning of the Medical Service and various aspects of Mission Service were among the issues considered in depth.

7. After years of efforts, a voucher system for taxi reimbursement is about to be implemented.

8. The Staff Committee also participated fully in Secretariat-wide staff-management consultations in the framework of the last two sessions of the Staff-Management Coordinating

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Committee (SMCC). The duration of the last session being sharply reduced due to financial reasons, it was impossible to deal effectively with the entire agenda.

9. On the basis of a Staff Council mandate, a proposal was submitted for raising the age of separation to 62, without loss of the acquired right to retire with a full pension at age 60. For tactical reasons, the proposal will be pursued in the Pension Board as a means of improving the actuarial position of the Pension Fund.

10. For years, the New York Staff Union has been trying to bridge the gap between the two separate staff categories. As a first step in that direction, it has been agreed that the nomenclature be changed so as to avoid the impression of a caste system. The idea has been accepted in SMCC and Administration agreed to pursue the matter together with the staff in the International Civil Service Commission.

11. Managers will be required, when asking for resources, to include requests for F-2 posts to increase the number of posts available for the G-to-P competitive examination. Since the inception of the exam in 1979, the Staff Committee has organized the only training courses to prepare staff in the occupational fields of the examination. The administration agreed that training for the exam should be comprehensive and consistent for all duty stations who are eligible to take it. Towards that end, a working groups will look into the feasibility of providing such training. Meanwhile, the sample examinations would be updated for all occupational groups, efforts would continue to increase the number of occupational groups represented by an examination, and staff members would be allowed to take reasonable time for study during working hours before each examination, according to the needs of service.

12. Two additional issues - appointment and promotion and performance appraisal - will be covered under a separate heading.

## III. CAREER DEVELOPMENT/CLASSIFICATION

13. Unfortunately, no progress was made on the issue of career development for general service and related categories. Funds for career development were eliminated from the budget submitted to the General Assembly.

14. A preliminary version of a performance appraisal system was established by a working group. It will be tested this year in selected areas before SMCC takes the decision on its final adoption. The main objective of the Staff Committee in participating in this working group was to ensure that any new system is as fair and objective as possible and preserves the right of rebuttal, at least of any report that entails negative consequences for the staff member. We also insisted on the need for managerial accountability in the appraisal process.

## IV. APPOINTMENT, PLACEMENT & PROMOTION POLICY

15. The Staff Committee played a major role in development of revised promotion and placement procedures. As a result of the changes, vacancies will be posted and filled as they arise. This will avoid the situation where the promotion process, in most cases, simply serves to promote the person already placed in the post by management.

## V. SALARIES AND PENSIONS

16. From the day it assumed office, the Staff Committee was involved in a major effort aimed at resisting reductions in General Service salaries and pensions. Together with the other members of the Coordinating Committee of International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations (CCISUA), we organized major staff demonstrations in New York, Montreal and London to protest attacks on general service entitlements. Despite our best efforts, it was not possible to avoid negative changes altogether; yet, compared to the initial outlook, damage was substantially limited.

17. As for Professionals, the general economic and political climate has made it impossible thus far to repair the damage to salaries and pensions suffered during the 1980's. At least the post adjustment system has moved normally, and no freeze is expected in the foreseeable future. This is due, to a large degree, to a revision, initiated by CCISUA, in the way the net remuneration margin is calculated.

## VI. SECURITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE

18. Events in this area required a great deal of attention on the part of the Staff Committee. Efforts continued to obtain the release of detained colleagues and to seek information about those who are missing. Major efforts were made to publicize their cases.

19. The last two years have witnessed a steep increase in the number of staff members killed in the line of duty. The Staff Committee has started a tradition whereby, in the morning of Staff Day, a ceremony honours both civilian and military dead. We have also proposed the erection of a memorial on UN grounds, and work on this proposal is under way.

20. We have also pressed for improved security measures with a view to creating a more secure environment for staff on missions. The Security Coordinator's office has been strengthened and a major review of security practices is well under way.

## VII. ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

21. The failure of the Administration to submit a report to the General Assembly at its 47th session means that any major reforms will have to await the 49th session, at which time the Fifth Committee is expected to deal with the matter in depth. The Sixth Committee did, however, examine the functioning of the Committee on Applications for Review of Administrative Tribunal Judgements. The views of the Staff Committee, namely that this question should be considered next year in the context of an overall review of the administration of justice, were brought to the attention of that Committee, which agreed to postpone any action until next year. A proposal to improve the effectiveness of the Panel of Counsel will be submitted to the Administration shortly.

## VIII. ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

22. The Staff Committee worked very closely with the Medical Service on the issue of smoking in the Secretariat. It proposed to the Staff Council that the United Nations Secretariat be made smoke-free, as has been done in UNICEF House, and UNDP. While this proposal was rejected, the Staff Council did agree to restrict to separate, designated smoking areas. Building Management Service (BMS) is now supposedly in the process of setting up these areas.

23. Remote card access readers were installed at all the entrances to the Secretariat in 1993. The Staff Committee was concerned about the effect of these readers on the health of staff members. The Staff Committee commissioned a study by a consultant to verify the Administration's claims that these readers have no harmful effects. An agreement has been reached with management that the card readers would not be used until the staff's concerns are addressed.

24. In cooperation with the Staff Counsellor, the Staff Committee made a proposal to provide medical insurance for G-5 visa holders employed by UN staff members. This proposal is awaiting approval by the Staff Council. The insurance provider will also submit a proposal for secondary dependents by the end of January for Staff Council review. Other areas of cooperation include the substance abuse and mental health programmes.

## IX. RESTRUCTURING

25. Of all the problems encountered over the last year and a half, those posed by restructuring were among the most formidable. The uncertainties created by this process continue to cause widespread concern about job security and career prospects. From the first days in office, the Staff Committee has had frequent meetings on the restructuring issue with nearly every top management official. The Staff Committee has done its utmost to obtain -- and to disseminate -- all available

information, and has endeavoured to achieve a maximum of staff-management consultation in this area. At every step, we have insisted that the Secretary-General's commitment that no one lose his or her job as a result of restructuring be respected.

26. As the term of the Committee was coming to an end, we had to deal with the very serious problems arising from a major reduction in the funds available to finance development-related overhead posts. Intensive consultations between the Administration, the Staff Committee and staff representatives from the departments directly concerned are continuing with a view to protecting staff rights in the context of a major post reduction.

## X. WOMEN'S ISSUES

27. As proposed by the Staff Committee, the Staff Council approved the hiring of a consultant to review the classification structure of the secretarial occupation with a view to identifying a valid career path, and ensuring that the category is being compensated for work of equal value to that done by other occupational groups. One major accomplishment was the approval the Staff Committee obtained from the Administration to have the Focal Point for Women work with our consultant.

28. The Staff Committee was further involved in the drafting of an Administrative Instruction on sexual harassment, a matter of great concern to women, though not limited to them, and played a major part in preventing the watering-down of the text agreed in SMCC XVI.

## XI. RELATIONS WITH STAFF AWAY FROM HEADQUARTERS AND WITH OTHER STAFF ASSOCIATIONS

29. In accordance with the CCISUA Statute, New York held the Presidency of CCISUA in 1993. Given our location at Headquarters, the New York Staff Committee receives innumerable requests for information and assistance from other duty stations, which we handle to the best of our ability.

30. The Staff Committee maintained communications with staff on the various missions on issues of collective and individual concern. Policy-related issues were dealt with at the appropriate levels.

## XII. RELATIONS WITH THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

31. The Staff Committee, together with other staff associations in CCISUA, decided to withdraw from the ICSC during the highly frustrating London summer session and sat out the 1993 Spring session in New York. An agreement having been reached with the Chairman on procedures to make staff participation more meaningful, CCISUA did attend the last session in Vienna, where it was possible in particular to further limit the damage to General Service pensions.

## XIII. DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

32. It has long been recognized that, for the Staff Union to be effective, it must be seen to have the backing of the staff at large. Yet, for this support to be forthcoming, the staff have to be aware of the major issues the Union is dealing with.

33. The Staff Committee was available to any Unit wishing to invite its members to provide briefings.

34. The Staff Committee further organized a series of workshops on pension issues in order to help individuals understand the pension structure and to answer questions about individual pension matters.

35. In order to provide a continuous flow of information, the Committee decided to issue a weekly newsletter, *What's New*, in addition to the traditional Staff Committee Bulletins which inform the staff in detail about important matters.

36. While the UN Staff Report appears under the auspices of the Staff Union, the Staff Committee has no control over its contents.

Re: para 4

## Staff Union of the United Nations Secretariat

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### Balance Sheet
### 30 September 1993

| Assets | | Liabilities | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cash | 1,083,268.99 | Liabilities | 0.00 |
| CDs | 295,699.52 | Total Liabilities | 0.00 |
| Receivables | 52,800.00 | | |
| Other funds due | 30,000.00 | Capital | |
| | | SUUNS Capital | 1,461,768.51 |
| | | Total Cap. | 1,461,768.51 |
| Total Assets | 1,461,768.51 | Total L&C | 1,461,768.51 |

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### Statement of Income and Expenditures
### 30 September 1993

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Income: | | |
| Contributions | | 148,966.92 |
| Interest income | | 65,085.58 |
| Staff Newspaper Advertisements | | 2,411.00 |
| Miscellaneous | | 425.00 |
| Transfers | | 13,572.50 |
| Total Income | | 230,461.00 |
| Expenditures: | | |
| Consultants | 710.00 | |
| Security & Independence | 22,441.50 | |
| Accounting & Auditing | 4,515.00 | |
| Legal Advice & Support | 1,400.00 | |
| Travel & Subsistence | 18,155.20 | |
| Office Supplies | 245.75 | |
| Staff Newspaper | 49,742.37 | |
| Misc. Printing | 100.00 | |
| Staff Emergency Fund | 10,000.00 | |
| Staff Day Deficit (1992) | 12,009.00 | |
| Staff Action | 20,924.78 | |
| CCISUA Dues (1992) | 50,700.00 | |
| CCISUA (Advances for 1993) | 63,108.68 | |
| Fundraising Drive | 1,590.00 | |
| Hospitality | 988.68 | |
| Unpaid bills 35th Staff Council (Auditing and Staff Newspaper) | 7,500.00 | |
| Transfer of Unpaid Balance of 1991/92 CCISUA budget to Central Account | 14,392.00 | |
| UNFSSU | 20,000.00 | |
| Office Equipment | 2,175.06 | |
| Bank Charges | 31.00 | |
| Write off per audited books | 4,000.00 | |
| Total Expenditures | 304,629.02 | |
| Total | 304,629.02 | 230,461.00 |
| Net Deficit | 74,168.02 | |